

SENATE RESOLUTION 125

By Dixon

A RESOLUTION to commend Ms. Helen Adamo for her honorable and astute service to the people of Tennessee as an advocate for the mentally ill and their families.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should pause to specially recognize those estimable public servants who have dedicated themselves and their personal excellence to improving the quality of life for their fellow citizens; and

WHEREAS, Helen Adamo is one such citizen who evinces the greatest integrity and probity in all her chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, a native of Shelby County, Ms. Adamo is a highly respected member of the greater Memphis community; and

WHEREAS, Helen Adamo first became interested in helping the mentally ill and their loved ones when her own son was diagnosed with schizophrenia in 1972; at the time she did not know where to turn to receive the best possible care for her son; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Adamo found a vehicle to help mentally ill people like her son in 1983, when she attended the first meeting of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI) in Memphis. Today, her house is a virtual extension of the Memphis office for NAMI; she has

been under contract with the organization since 1997, and has volunteered her time and expertise to the organization for over twenty years; and

WHEREAS, throughout her exemplary tenure as an advocate for the mentally ill and their families, Helen Adamo has distinguished herself as a public-spirited citizen of the highest order and an exceptional asset to her community; and

WHEREAS, since she began tackling the mental health care system on her son's behalf, Ms. Adamo has spent incalculable numbers of hours on the telephone telling people about various services, advising them, consoling them, and working as an advocate; and

WHEREAS, her job is comparable to that of a hospital discharge planner or a case manager; Helen Adamo's duties typically include referring people to the appropriate agencies, helping them maneuver through the mental health care system, and encouraging them every step of the way; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Adamo's outstanding success as a public servant and civic leader is directly attributable to her reliance on the time-honored values of hard work and common sense and her uncommon ability to work well with people from all walks of life; and

WHEREAS, before working in her current position with the NAMI, Helen Adamo served for nearly 20 years in a development and public relations capacity at Rhodes College. After retiring in 1983, she started two home-based businesses before becoming an inventor and entrepreneur; and

WHEREAS, after breaking her hip in 1990, Helen invented WalkerAids which are fabric aprons with pockets that attach to the fronts of walkers, so that people who use walkers can carry what they need with them at all times; she has since added utility bags for wheelchairs and aprons for pediatric appliances to her product line; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Adamo works tirelessly for the causes and interests of the mentally ill; she edits *The Advisor* newsletter; publicizes support group meetings; and organizes education classes called, The Journey of Hope, for families of people suffering from bipolar disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, depression, and schizophrenia; and

WHEREAS, Helen Adamo is an extremely giving person who daily reaches out with compassion to people whom life has treated unfairly, and she epitomizes the ideal of the consummate professional, dedicated public servant and reliable friend and neighbor in Memphis; and

WHEREAS, due to her hard work, dedication, and innovative thinking, the Memphis office of NAMI will be recognized as the top affiliate among NAMI's 1200 branches at the 2000 national NAMI meeting in San Diego. One of the many reasons the Memphis affiliate is so highly regarded nationally is its creation of the Crisis Intervention Team (CIT), which is a corps of 190 uniformed police officers who have been trained by mental health professionals to handle crisis calls involving mentally ill persons. Helen was a valuable member of the team who researched and proposed the CIT concept to the city; and

WHEREAS, in addition to playing an important role in the creation of the CIT team, Mrs. Adamo lobbied successfully for the formation of the county's Jail Mentally Ill committee, which is studying ways and means to identify and treat mentally ill persons who have been incarcerated in the Shelby County Jail. She is also active in NAMI's "I Vote, I Count" program, which supports candidates who understand and are sympathetic to issues affecting the mentally ill; and

WHEREAS, in March 2000, Helen Adamo received the Women of Achievement's Courage Award, "for facing active opposition and backing an unpopular cause in which she deeply believed."; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Adamo is wholly committed to the noble precepts of public service that have earned Tennessee recognition as the "Volunteer State," and she should be specially recognized; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, That we hereby commend Mrs. Helen Adamo for her honorable and astute service to the good people of Memphis, Shelby County and

Tennessee as a stalwart advocate for the mentally ill and their families and salute her unswerving commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.